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# Design and Subjects of Baptism.

## DESIGN OF BAPTISM.

The primary design of baptism seems to be institutional—the external distinction and alliance of the disciples of Christ. This design appears in speaking of baptism, “in the name of Jesus Christ,” “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” “in the name of the Lord.” Acts ii. 38; viii. 16; x. 48; xix. 5. It was expressly by the authority of Jesus, and as enrolling themselves among his followers, that men submitted to baptism. As a school of philosophy or a political party emblazons on its escutcheon or banner the name of its founder or leader, and in that name advocates its doctrines and measures, so the disciples of Jesus celebrate his name in baptism, and in his name devote themselves to the cause of religion and human salvation.

This design of baptism appears more clearly in those intenser expressions, "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" "baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus;" "baptized into Jesus Christ;" "baptized into Christ." Mat. xxvii. 19; Acts xix. 5; Rom. vi. 3; Gal. iii. 27. In this rite professionally men assume the most intimate possible relation to Christ. They avowedly enter into his doctrines, service, and kingdom. Forswearing allegiance to the world, they pledge themselves to Christ. It is no outward attention or particular devotion, but an inward and intimate union, and an unreserved consecration they profess in baptism.

To this design of the ordinance the Apostle refers, when, in rebuking the party spirit of the Corinthian church he inquires, "were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" As ye were not baptized into the name of Paul, Apolos, or Cephas, why do ye look to them as masters? As ye were all alike baptized into the name of Christ, let him alone be your Lord and Master. This design is further referred to by the Apostle to the Gallatians, "As



many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Gal. iii. 27. As there is a spiritual substitution of the old man of the natural sinful character, by the new man created in righteousness and holiness; so there is a professional change of character, and the individual being is declared by baptism to be merged in Christ.

As in joining a school of philosophy one assumes its distinguishing dress and manners, or enlisting in an army puts on its uniform and observes its discipline, or connecting himself with a civic or benevolent order, conforms to its ceremonial, or becoming a citizen takes the prescribed oath of allegiance, so in baptism the believer assumes the badge of Christ's disciples, puts on the uniform of christian soldiers, observes the initiatory rite of the christian order, takes the oath of christian citizenship. He is baptized in the name of Christ, is enrolled one of his followers, is pledged to his cause and initiated into his church. Thus by biblical interpreters, and by the common apprehensions of men, baptism has been regarded as the christian profession, the external distinction of the christian community, the door of the visible

*CHAPTER IV.*

church. In this act the believer professionally separates himself from the world and joins the church of Christ. He renounces all rival authority, and calls Jesus alone Lord of the conscience and author of salvation. In harmony with this design, the commission would be thus construed, "Go teach all nations the Divine laws and truths I have revealed to you, and by baptism distinguish and unite into communities all who shall become subject to the authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by the regeneration wrought within them through the Word and Spirit of God." Suitably to this Olshausen says, in commenting on the commission, that "*Baptizo eistina* signifies baptism as devolving a thorough obligation, a rite whereby one is pledged; and the sublime object to which baptism binds consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Robinson says, "To baptize or to be baptized into any one, i. e. into a profession of faith in any one, and sincere obedience to him." Calvin says, "It is the oath of a spiritual soldier, by which we promise perpetual duty." Appointed in this institutional use as a test of faith, repentance, and allegiance, baptism is not without great

moral force. In the missionary attitude of the gospel, baptism challenges a formal renunciation of all the faiths and philosophies of the world antagonistic to the teachings of Christ. In the commendation of the individual claims of christianity, it symbolizes before the inquirer all he is to experience in order to inherit eternal life.

Its relation to forgoing christian disposition and experience is similar to that of the oath of allegiance of a citizen to his antecedent political choice, purpose, and devotion; the enlistment of a soldier to his anterior martial qualities, bias, and aims; the signature of a contract to the forgoing consideration and mutual determination of its conditions; or the celebration of marriage to the antecedent mutual choice, affection, and devotion of hearts. The christian profession without forgoing gracious experience, disposition and purpose, is without efficacy—an imposture; with them it outwardly authenticates and symbolizes the christian life and hope. In a summary and palpable submission of the claims of the gospel, and celebration of its doctrines and promises, baptism has often been a means of arresting the attention of the careless,

leading the wavering to decision, and animating the timid believer with cheering hope and exultant joy. It is in no other sense necessary to salvation than all obedience is. The neglect of any law distinctly apprehended to be from God, precludes the evidence of piety. Willful disobedience supposes rebellion against God incompatible with a state of salvation. A person may be saved neglecting, because misapprehending, the law of baptism, as in neglecting, because misapprehending, any other positive law of religion. But surely this possibility will not be plead in excuse for indifference to the import and obligations of Divine requirements.

Baptism, in addition to its institutional use, has also a various symbolical significance. As the Passover had a double meaning, and the Lord's Supper a two-fold import, so baptism has a various symbolical sense, arising out of and harmonizing with its primary idea of baptism into Christ. It symbolizes the washing away of sin. "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts xxii. 16. It re-

fers to that purity of heart and life attained by the "washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," and avowed in the christian profession. By a primary order of religion men are commanded to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God," "wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes." Isa. i. 16; Jer. i. 14. This great and primary effect of religion on the heart, in accordance with the significance of a larger class of the ceremonial purification of the Jews, is set forth in baptism. We are baptized for (into) the remission of sins, to declare and show forth their remission attained in repentance and reformation. We are baptized *into* the remission of sins, just as we are baptized *into* Christ, professionally.

This significance of baptism is universally conceded. Numberless authors could be cited, with Melancthon, coadjutor of Luther, and author of Augsburg Confession, and also that of the Saxon churches. "Baptism is immersion into water. The immersion signifies that our sins are washed away, and merged into the death of Christ "

Baptism is also symbolical of the change of heart wrought in regeneration.

That change is a death to the world in its unholy principles and pursuits, and emergence into a new, higher and holier sphere of being. It is quickening the dead and calling them forth from the tomb. All are born in sin, and under the darkness and insensibility of a spiritual death. Unless quickened to spiritual life and apprehension, men never appreciate their spiritual relations, love God, or seek for glory, honor and immortality. In this change men "die unto sin," and become alive unto God. Without this newness of life, pardon of sins would avail little, salvation would be incomplete. This change originates new impulses, new aims, and new hopes. "Old things pass away; behold all things become new." The believer is "crucified to the world and the world to him." "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were *baptized* into his death?" "Wherefore we were

buried with him by *baptism* into death." Rom. vi. 1-13; Col. ii. 12, 20; iii. 1-3.

Baptism, then, represents the change of regeneration under the figure of a death and resurrection—a burial and rising again—an emerging into a new state of being, new consciousness, new pursuits, and new hopes. This plain scriptural signification of baptism is also recognized by the best christian writers of succeeding generations. Hermas says, "Into which (waters of baptism) men go down bound to death, but come up assigned to life." Basil says, "We being baptized into death in symbol, should die to sin." Chrysostom says, "In it (baptism) are celebrated a *burial*, and *death*, and *resurrection*, and *life*." Cyril says, "So then also, descending into the water, and being in a manner buried with him, (Christ,) are raised again, walking in newness of life." Leo the Great says, "In the regular administration of baptism death also takes place in the destruction of sin, and the rising up from the waters is an image of one coming forth from the sepulchre." Photius patriarch of Constantinople, the greatest man of his age, says, "It is a likeness of death we have in

baptism." Tyndale, the martyr translator, says, "The plunging into the water signifieth that we die and are buried with Christ, as concerning the old life of sin which is in Adam; and the pulling out again signifieth that we rise again with Christ in a new life." Luther says, "It signifies this, that the old man, and our sinful nature, which consists of flesh and blood, are totally *immersed* by Divine grace." Grotius says, "An immersion of the whole body into the river, so that it was no longer conspicuous, bore an image of the burial which is given to the dead, . . . an image both of burial and resurrection.

In like manner the most learned and reliable commentators of succeeding periods, as Burket, Turnitin, Witsius, Leighton, Doddridge, Wesley, have agreed in this symbolic signification of baptism. Dr. Chalmers only represents their views in greater fullness and strength of statement, "Jesus Christ by death underwent this sort of baptism—even immersion under the surface of the ground, whence he soon emerged again, by his resurrection. We, by being baptized into his death, are conceived to have made a similar trans-



lation; in the act of descending under the water of baptism, to have resigned an old life, and in the act of ascending, to emerge into a second or new life."

Baptism is also symbolical of the resurrection. "If we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Rom. vi. 5. "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, (to express the hopeful condition of the dead,) if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" Cor. xv. 12-29. The two great provisions of the gospel securing our salvation, are atonement and resurrection. "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, was buried and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures." 1 Cor. xv. 34. "Without the shedding of blood there was no promise of remission." The efficacious blood was shed in the atonement. "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished." These great essential provisions, with other related doctrines,

are commemorated by the ordinances—the atonement by the Lord's Supper, the resurrection by Baptism. Christ “was delivered (as set forth in the supper,) for our offenses, and raised again, (as set forth in baptism,) for our justification.” Why should the atonement be celebrated in an ordinance rather than the resurrection, without which its great end is not attained, and displayed to the universe? But unless symbolized in baptism the resurrection has no symbol. Unless baptism speak on this subject, the ordinances in their silence leave the Saviour and the church in the tomb. But in its utterance and prophecy baptism proclaims the resurrection of the dead through Jesus Christ our Lord. And as the cause of natural and spiritual death was the same, and they are counterwrought alike by the gospel; so the same ordinance illustrates the two-fold resurrection from sin and the grave. Hence the intimate association with Christ in a two fold hope—we are not only buried in baptism, but buried with Christ in baptism. We are not merely baptized with the likeness of death, but of his death. We not only rise to a new life, but with him to a new life. In

the Supper we contemplate Jesus wounded, slain, for us; in baptism as raised for our justification, and alive for ever more.

This symbolical meaning of the ordinance, though to a great extent overlooked on account of disuse of scriptural baptism, is particularly noticed by some of the best biblical scholars of succeeding ages. Justin says, "We celebrate the symbols of his (Christ's) sufferings and resurrection in baptism." The apostolic constitution, embodying the early and common interpretation of the church, says, "Baptism was given to represent the death of Christ." Basil says, "There is but one death for the world and one resurrection from the dead, of which baptism is the type." Witsius says, "Baptism represents communion with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ." Milton in his treatise on christian doctrine says, "Under the gospel the first of the sacraments, so called, is baptism, wherein the bodies of believers, who engage themselves to pureness of life, are immersed, (*in per aquam perflurutem*) in running water, to signify their regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and their union with Christ in his death, burial, and

resurrection." McKnight, the leading man of the Scotch Presbyterian church of his time, and for more than twenty years moderator of its Assembly, says, in his commentary on Romans vi. 4, "Christ submitted to be baptized, that is, to be buried under the water, by John, and to be raised out of it again, as an emblem of his future death and resurrection. In like manner the baptism of believers is emblematical of their own death, burial and resurrection."

From this various symbolical import baptism, it will be seen, commemorates and celebrates the whole christian institution.

It is an avowal of faith in the Trinity. Mat. iii. 16, 17; xxviii. 19; John i. 33; Eph. ii. 18; Tit. iii. 4-7. It declares our adoption by the Father. John i. 12, 13; 2 Cor. vii. 17, 18; Gal. iii. 26-29; 1 John iii. 1-3. It proclaims union to the Son. Matt. xxvi. 22 23; Acts viii. 35-39; Rom. vii. 3-14; Col. ii. 12, 13-20; iii. 1-11; 1 Peter iii. 18-22;

Cor. i. 30. It professes sanctification by the Spirit. John iii. 5-8; vii. 37-39; xiv. 15-17, 26, 29; xvi. 12-15; Acts ii. 38, 39; Rom. viii. 1-27; 2 Cor. i. 22, 23; Gal. iii. 2, 3; iv. 6, 7; v. 22, 25.

Eph. i. 11-14; iv. 30. It is a public pledge of renunciation of sins. Mark i. 4, 5; Acts ii. 38; xxii. 16; Rom. vi. 4. It is an expression of our hope of a resurrection from the dead. Rom. vi. 5; Col. iii. 1-4; 1 Cor. xv. 29. It constitutes a visible bond of union among christians. 1 Cor. xii. 3-31; Eph. iv. 5.

Should an intelligent pagan in some distant isle, witnessing for the first time a group of disciples observing the supper, ask the meaning of the observance, an adequate reply would unfold to him the mystery and history of redemption. Or should such an one, witnessing the baptismal profession, demand the reason and signifi-  
cance of the rite, he would be told, "Thus discipleship and devotion to Christ, the world's Teacher and Saviour, are avowed; thus moral cleansing, through regeneration and atonement, is represented; thus a death to sin and an emergence into a sphere of new life, aims, and hopes is signified; and thus a promise of the resurrection from the dead is symbolized. In this varied significance baptism stands a symbol of the christian system, a memorial of redemption, a monument of the mission of Christ. Were

the scriptures, church histories and creeds lost, the Lord's supper and baptism, properly interpreted, would restore and celebrate christianity.

As the column of Place Vendome bears indelible inscriptions of Napoleon's campaigns, battles and victories, so baptism is an indestructible monument of the divine character and achievements of the Messiah. It was meet that christianity should not confide her history and promise to merely written records, or to structures of brass or marble. Such memorials are costly, perishable, and not available to all the conditions of humanity. Jesus authorized no costly mausoleum or expensive ceremonial that might in its approach or observance limit the privilege and promise of his followers. In the supper he selected for his memorial the "poor man's cup and the poor man's crumb." In the memorial of baptism he appointed an element available wherever man can live and worship God. In its commemorative and symbolical import baptism rises above the grandeur of pyramids with their mystic revelations—the monuments of Babylon with their symbolic histories—the commemorative structures of Greece, cele-

brating their wars, arts and civilization—or the arches and columns of modern times perpetuating the fame of conquerors and the glory of kingdoms. It commemorates the work and promise of redemption for the race. In an impressive memorial it elevates the name of Christ as the Saviour of the world, and commends his great salvation as available to all.

But some, denying or overlooking this institutional and commemorative use of baptism, without scripture warrant, impute to it a special efficacy in the attainment of regeneration and pardon. This is the theory of papacy, national establishments, and, in modified form, of some dissenting denominations. Against the doctrine of spiritual efficacy in baptism we urge the following considerations :

I. The alleged analogies of efficacy in outward observances, narrated in the scriptures, referred to for the purpose, do not warrant it. The cleansing of Naaman is instanced. But his cleansing must have proceeded from faith in the order of the prophet, and the God of the prophet, and not from any mystic efficacy imparted to the water. But

even if a miracle of physical healing were wrought through the waters of the Jordan, there is no evidence of the greater miracle of spiritual regeneration through the waters of baptism. The healing of the Hebrews bitten by the fiery serpents, also referred to in vindicating the doctrine of sacramental efficacy, must have arisen from faith in God's promise and Moses' mission therein declared, and not from any efficacy vested in the resplendent brass. Or even if a temporary miraculous charm were given to the brazen serpent for bodily healing, we have no evidence of a permanent charm in the waters of baptism for spiritual healing. The pardon of sin by the Jewish sacrifices, referred to in advocating a sacramental efficacy in baptism, arose from faith in God's mercy and gracious promise celebrated in the appointed sacrifices, and not from mystic efficacy in the victim or ministering priest. But even if the efficacy were vested in the sacrifice, there is no evidence of such virtue in the element or ministry of baptism. Pardon was only officially pronounced through the sacrifices, and probably no one supposes a bed-ridden Hebrew, cut off from ceremo-



nial observances, was therefore cut off from the mercy of God; or that every Hebrew outwardly observing them, insured participation in that mercy. There is no evidence that a bed-ridden Hebrew might not share the mercy of God without the commemorative observance. If mercy were possible to a Hebrew without sacrifice, much more to a believer without external observance. If they observed sacrifice *for* remission, and yet sacrifice was no meritorious or efficient cause of remission; much more, though men are baptized *for* remission, baptism may be no meritorious or efficient cause of remission. All the alleged analogies of the old dispensation, therefore, avail nothing towards proving special efficacy in baptism for the attainment of regeneration, gracious experience, and the pardon of sin.

II. The various passages magnifying the symbolic importance of baptism, so often cited for the purpose, fail to support this theory of spiritual efficacy in baptism. The passage, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," Eph. iv. 5, is often misconstrued as ranking in moral dignity and importance, an external ordinance with Christ himself and the

christian faith. But the passage cannot mean *one* baptism, (immersion,) as distinguished from many; for there is no evidence that *many* baptisms or immersions were ever pleaded for. Nor can it mean *one baptism* as distinguished from sprinkling or pouring; for they are *not* baptism. The passage, therefore, must signify *oneness* or unity of the christian profession, in its aggressive attitude, designed to be symbolized and organized by baptism. "There is one Lord, (sovereignty, source of authority, or headship to the church,) one faith, (one system of doctrines, principles and precepts,) and one baptism," (one profession, a common aim, attitude, work, and co-operation.)

The Saviour's expression in conversation with Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3-7, is cited as proving a causative relation of baptism to spiritual birth. But none of the more probable interpretations of this controverted text appears to us to sustain that idea. If it refer to baptism it cannot be denied that the collocation of words gives a precedence to baptism over spiritual influence, and thus gives counten-

ance to baptismal regeneration, as taught by papacy. If it be urged there may have been transposition of the words in transcribing early manuscripts, and that it should have read, "Born of the Spirit and of water," with that rendering the water may be referred to as typical of the effects of being born of the Spirit, as "baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire" is supposed to mean baptized in the Holy Spirit, purifying as fire purifies; so this passage may mean a birth of the Spirit, which cleanses the soul as water cleanses the body. Or, if we study the context, the interpretation of the passage as referring to the two births, the natural and spiritual will seem quite probable. Nicodemus represents the speculative and rationalistic world, raising doubts of the reality or necessity of spiritual change. They believe that religion is only moral development—proper self-culture. They object to the idea of conversion, regeneration, and new birth. The Saviour says to them through Nicodemus, "saving virtue is not inherited in natural birth. From the womb man goes astray from God. He is under a law of sin and death. 'That which is born of the

flesh is flesh.' True religion must arise, therefore, from regeneration—a second birth. Sin, not holiness, is hereditary. Only that that is born from above, of the Spirit of God, is holy."

Thus in the varying expression, "born from above, and born of the Spirit," the one great truth is enforced—the necessity of a change of heart, of regeneration. "A man does not enter the kingdom of God, O Nicodemus, as thou boastest, by mere natural birth, and through hereditary privilege and promise. More than this is necessary. A man must be born again—born from above—born spiritually as well as naturally, before he can see, enter, or enjoy the Kingdom of God."

But if the foregoing interpretations are rejected, and a reference to baptism is claimed, still it may be only a symbolical reference, using the sign for the thing signified. In Titus iii. 5, it is said we are saved by the washing of regeneration, (spiritual birth,) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. We are saved by the cleansing of regeneration, typified and symbolized by baptism.

Thus except a man be born again, cleansed by a spiritual birth, "the washing of water by the Word," represented and symbolized by baptism

appropriately accompanying it, and also baptized in spiritual influences, awakening holy affections and aspirations, he is not in the kingdom of heaven. By no necessary interpretation, therefore, does this passage support the pretensions of baptismal regeneration.

The commission also has been cited as placing baptism upon equal terms with faith. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." But if equally important why are not both alike repeated in the negative statement? Does not the omission show that in the foregoing language reference is had to authentication of faith, appointed to be ceremonially made in baptism? It is to faith, authenticated and embodied, that salvation is promised. Salvation is not promised to literal baptism, but to symbolic baptism—a baptism embodying and illustrating faith. But in supporting the theory of spiritual efficiency in baptism, three scripture passages of similar expression and import, are chiefly relied upon. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." "Preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you,

in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." Mark i. 42; Luke iii. 3; Acts ii. 38. In these passages is not the reference to repentance as the procuring, and to baptism as a symbolic cause of remission? According to the analogy of the teachings of the scriptures, the promise of these passages might remain with baptism withdrawn, but not with repentance withdrawn. These texts, therefore, do not teach baptism for remission, but repentance symbolized in baptism for remission. Remission, therefore, refers to repentance as procuring it, but to baptism only as professing, declaring, and symbolizing it.

If baptism sustain the same vital relation to salvation as faith and repentance, how could the Apostle to the Gentiles so often omit its mention when setting forth those conditions? How could he, in his extensive travels, preaching the gospel to so many thousands, and founding so many churches, have paid no more personal attention to the observance of the rite? If baptism sustain the same vital relation to salvation that spiritual duties do, was not Paul guilty of a serious omission, both in teaching and practice? When the

jailor demanded the essential conditions of salvation, he did not include baptism, but only said "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And he expressly declares that he seldom administered the ordinance.

We no more attain repentance through the instrumentality or act of baptism, than we do Christ. Pardon, (a state of justification, fitness for death and heaven,) is not as we believe conveyed to a sinner through baptism, or prayer, or confession, or any mere act of worship or obedience. It is bestowed rather upon the spirit of penitance, faith, and obedience, antecedent to the obedience itself. The particular act in which it is sensibly experienced may be merely incidental. Some rejoice in the assurance of pardon first in the closet, others before the family altar, others again in the social meeting, while others gain the evidence of pardon or acceptance while reading the scriptures, conversing with a pious friend, or while appealing to others in behalf of the importance of the gospel. The spirit of penitence and obedience, in which alone men are pardoned—regenerated—is inspired by the renewing of the Holy Spirit; and that

Spirit must be anterior to baptism, and all other accepted rites of religious worship. Baptism is the method of formally professing gracious change, experience, and sense of pardon, but not of obtaining them. It does not put away "the filth of the flesh," but symbolizes it. It does not wash away sins, but represents a moral ablution by the cleansing influences of the Holy Spirit. It does not remit sins, but declares their remission. Men reach the rite through the experience, and not the experience through the rite. To say we cannot attain what baptism signifies before baptism, is like saying we cannot attain what the Lord's Supper signifies before we observe the rite.

III. The theory that regeneration or pardon is attained through baptism, elevates outward human observance to the same rank and importance with spiritual and Divine agencies. The Word and Spirit of God have been, from the apostacy, the appointed means of regeneration. In some form of utterance and influence they have been available to all ages, nations, and kindreds. Every where mankind have been condemned for not attending to the word of God, ever falling upon their ear,



not walking in the spiritual light shining upon their path, and not loving and serving God revealed to them in nature and providence. Under the dispensation of a written revelation and of the gospel, it is equally obvious, the salvation of men depends upon spiritual provisions, means and character. Spiritual provisions and experiences may be every where available, and available to all, and at all times. No human being, council, or authority can interdict faith, penitence and prayer, by which the soul approaches God and attains salvation.

But if salvation depend upon outward rites, administered by others, the destiny of the soul is environed by fearful contingencies—subject to the will or caprice of fellow mortals. This is the essence and foundation principle of formalism and spiritual despotism. In magnifying the difference between gracious provision and ceremony, spiritual exercise and outward observance, we are at once vindicating the religious liberty of man, and the moral dignity of christianity. We dare not regard baptism of equal importance with faith and repentance. It is not like them a means of

approach to Christ, and essential to salvation. Without them all agree the soul must be lost. Who will affirm that all the unbaptized will perish! If baptism is the door to a visible church, who will claim that it is the portal to heaven! A symbol must not be elevated to the rank and importance of the thing signified. The wood of the altar must not be compared in value and sacredness with the meritorious sacrifice. The work of regeneration is so spiritual and so essentially God's work, that it must not be confounded with outward observance and human instrumentality. To attempt to supplement its appointed agencies would seem like attempting to supercede or assist the law of gravitation by a new combination of matter; give stability to the order of the material world by some external props of human device; substitute or assist the clouds in irrigating the parched earth by the effusions of a water pot; or to substitute or assist the sun, moon and stars in their appointed illumination of earth and heaven by bonfires and tapers. Baptism has sufficient importance as a positive symbolic institution, without elevating it to the rank and efficacy of the Word and

Spirit of God—of faith and repentance. To enforce its observance we would not give it a factitious importance, thereby commending the germ of papacy and formalism, and abetting superstition and spiritual despotism.

IV. In the whole tenor of the scriptures conversion and pardon are traced to spiritual agencies and experiences as their efficient cause. To obtain God's blessing the Hebrews were commanded "repent and turn yourselves from idols." Ezekiel xiv. 6. Impenitence is referred to as the only effective barrier to pardon. "No man repented him of his wickedness." Jer. viii. 6. As a means of obtaining the favor of God the people are summoned, "Therefore turn thee to thy God." Hosea xii. 6. In pointing men to saving duty John preached, "saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mark vi. 12. The Great Teacher, indicating the conditions of gracious acceptance, said to a listening crowd, "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Luke iii. 19. Peter, disclosing the essential grounds of pardon, says, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Pointing out

the way of salvation to the Athenians, Paul exclaims, "Now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Assenting to the preaching of Peter the multitude exclaimed, "God also to the Gentiles granted repentance to life." Acts iii. 19; xvii. 30; ii. 18. As holding forth the great provision and condition of salvation, it is said, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts v. 31. It is declared to be the great purpose of the mission and work of Christ, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Luke xxiv. 47.

In Paul's commission, setting forth the aims and conditions of salvation, outward ordinances are not embraced. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me," Acts xxvi. 18. Faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ is declared to be the ground of salvation. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His

righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God." Rom. iii. 25. In Hebrews, Paul traces regeneration to the word of God, as its effective instrumentality, and not to outward observances. "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. iv. 12.

The same apostle, in pointing out the great process and means of regeneration to the Thessalonians, leaves out all allusion to ceremonial observance. "Hath chosen you through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thes. ii. 13. And Peter refers to the Holy Spirit as the efficient means of regeneration. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." 1 Pet. i. 2, 3.

In this varied and emphatic statement of scripture, remission of sin is connected causatively with spiritual provision, agency, and experience, and not with outward observance. Why, then,

should two or three passages be wrested from their proper symbolical interpretation, to contradict the tenor of scriptures, establish a doctrine foreign to the genius of the gospel, and support the principle and imposture of Anti-Christ?

V. Further, the New Testament narratives show that regeneration, instead of being realized through baptism, uniformly preceded it. The followers of John avowed their penitence and reformation in baptism, and the symbolic profession was refused to those not giving evidence of regeneration. Christ and his apostles pursued the same order of preaching commenced by John, and only the penitent and believing were received as disciples in baptism. On the day of Pentecost three thousand, after exhibiting the most extraordinary evidence of change of heart, sought baptism in avowal of their penitence and faith. It was after regeneration and spiritual illumination—after answer to prayer and special revelation of his call to the apostleship, that Paul was baptized. It was after the testimonies of a pious life, and the attestation of spiritual influences, that Cornelius made the baptismal profession. It was after

the Lord had opened the heart of Lydia, as the rosebud is opened to the sweet influences of the morning, so that she received the gospel in penitence and faith, that she received the outward sign of an experienced inward grace. It was after the most extraordinary conviction and conversion, that the jailor professed in baptism the penitence he felt and the Saviour he embraced. And wherever the gospel was preached baptism was sought, after a change of heart with reference to the guilt and practice of sin, and a cordial reception of the provisions and promises of the gospel. It was resorted to not to attain a new heart and pardon, but to profess and symbolize them. There is no record of an apostolic baptism without such antecedent conversion—change of heart—regeneration. They approached the baptismal rite penitent, believing, and devoted to the fear of God and to the love and service of Christ. They sought baptism not to attain gracious dispositions and hopes, but to avow them.


VI. Finally, the symbolical character of baptism precludes the idea of special spiritual efficacy in it. Baptism is as obviously a symbolic rite as

the Lord's Supper; and but for the necessity of magnifying priestly powers and defending imposture of papacy and hierarchy, this would doubtless be universally allowed. Romanism, in giving a sacramental efficacy to both ordinances, is more consistent than protestants who attribute a spiritual efficacy to one and a symbolic significance to the other. They should claim a real presence in the supper as well as in baptism. If there is only a symbolic presence in the supper, then there is only a symbolic efficacy in baptism. This representative character of an ordinance cannot be overlooked in interpreting its history. If a carpenter is ordered to make a house, he proceeds to collect materials, lay the foundation, and rear the walls of the prescribed edifice. But if a pupil, standing before a blackboard, is commanded to make a house, he proceeds with chalk and line to draw the figure of one. The difference of circumstances in the order determines the difference of meaning in the two cases. When it is said five thousand partook of loaves and fishes distributed to them, a literal participation is necessarily intended. But when believers are said to "eat the



flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God," only a symbolical participation is meant. When Christ is called *the way—the door*—it is not meant that he is a paved street, or wood and nails, but the appointed medium of approach and access to God. In analogy to this interpretation of literal and symbolical language, if man is commanded to believe in Christ, or turn to God, or repent, to obtain remission of sins, a procuring cause is meant. But if a man were ordered to be baptized for the remission of sins, no such cause could be intended. He is ordered to represent, not to obtain, remission of sins by baptism. It is *for*—in declaration of the doctrine of pardon—that baptism is administered; to avow its cleansing effects, and not to procure them.

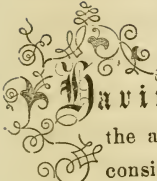
Baptism only celebrates the effects and value of repentance. The believer is baptized for remission of sins, as the fourth of July is celebrated for liberty. Waving banners, patriotic assemblies, booming cannon, and brilliant fire-works, do not achieve, but only celebrate liberty. By this commemoration citizens are reminded of the trials, struggles, and sacrifices by which freedom



was won, and incited to a higher appreciation and defense of the heritage thus bequeathed to them. In like manner by baptism the believer celebrates the means and value of pardon. He symbolizes its costly provisions and spiritual effects. Baptism in this respect is analagous to the ceremonial cleansing of the Jews. It was after the suspected or infected person had been ascertained by careful examination and infallible tests to be clear of the leprosy, that he was ceremonially declared by the official act of the priest to be clean. The official declaration and ceremonial ablution invariably followed, and by inviolable provision of law, the actual cure of the leper. The disease was cured, the plague removed, before the ceremonial declaration. So in baptism, the ceremonial cleansing and official declaration properly follow the spiritual cleansing and change of state declared and symbolized by it.

## I I.

## SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.



Having noticed in the foregoing discussion the act and design of baptism, we pass to consider its subjects. As a positive institution baptism can be binding in form and scope only by special appointment. Moral laws, as those of the Decalogue, are founded in the fitness of things, and are commended by an inherent propriety and obligation prior to their formal institution by lawgivers, or authentication by statute books. Positive laws, as the ceremonial of Judaism, the Lord's Supper, and Baptism, derive their whole obligation from specific appointment. Where there is no enactment there is no law and no obligation.

It is not necessary, therefore, to disprove the claims of infant baptism to justify its rejection. Unless it is authenticated by clear positive appointment, it should be discarded as an unauthor-

ized tradition. It cannot be based upon silence, or else a hundred other supposable rites not interdicted may be imposed upon the church. As he who takes away from Divine institutions shall lose his promised part in the holy city and kingdom of God, so he who adds to the institutions of Heaven, and imposes them upon men as Divine laws, may encumber religious observance, mislead the conscience, and incur the disapprobation of heaven. Until infant baptism is shown to be a scriptural appointment, without pointing out objections to it, we might persist in regarding it an interpolation in the statute book of the church. But yielding the advantage of a defensive attitude, we will attempt to disprove the claimed authority for the rite.

I. Baptism is limited to believers in its design. It is a personal voluntary profession of faith in the divine character and mission of Christ—of devotion to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in love and obedience forever. Can an infant feel or pledge such faith and devotion? Can it appreciate the divinity and atonement of Christ, the pardon of sin, regeneration, the promise of resurrec-

tion, or enroll itself a disciple of Christ and a member of his church? As well might an infant join a school of philosophy, a Masonic or Odd Fellows' Lodge, a civic or military order, or a literary or scientific club, or political party, as a voluntary christian institution. To plead a prospective and representative bearing of the ordinance, overlooks the personal and voluntary character of the christian profession. "Baptism is not a parental pledge, but a personal covenant. It pertains to present, not to a prospective faith—to an experienced, not a promised salvation. It celebrates union with Christ, not with parents or progenitors. It is the symbol of a spiritual regeneration and its attendant hopes, not of birth-right privileges and promises."\* As well, therefore, subject infants to the discipline of the army, the ceremonies of a civic or benevolent order, in accordance with the relations, professions, or hopes of parents, as to the orders of the church.

II. Baptism is also limited to believers in its command. All the rules binding upon civic, lit-

\* Childhood: Its Promise and Training.

erary, or moral associations, are found incorporated in their constitutions. All the laws binding upon corporations or states, are distinctly enjoined in their charters or statute books. The passover, feast of tabernacles, particular sacrifices, and purifications of the Jews, are formally appointed in their ceremonial. In the new dispensation the Lord's Supper and Baptism of believers is specifically enjoined. And we know of no instance in the whole range of voluntary association of men, or of human or divine government, where a positive law has obtained and become binding without forgoing specific appointment. But in what verse, chapter, or book of the constitution of the church is a command for infant baptism found? The great commission, where it should be found if a divine institution, by its restrictive terms precludes it. "Go teach all nations, baptizing them." If it is urged that infants are embraced in "all nations," so are inebriates, profane persons, and infidels. Obviously, only those who are *capable* from age, capacity, or state of heart, of understanding and receiving the gospel, and actually become disciples of Christ, are directed

to be baptized. Omission in a directory or order may be as restrictive as specification. An agent is ordered to purchase an hundred beeves; if he adds to the order a hundred calves he transcends his commission. A book merchant orders fifty copies of Webster's quarto Dictionary; if fifty copies of Webster's abridgement are added, the order is transcended, and the merchant is not bound by it. If a recruiting officer, ordered to enlist men of a certain age and stature, goes beyond his commission and enrolls persons of a different age and stature, he will be cashiered. So the commission to baptize those who are *taught* and *discipled*, or who have *repented* or *believed*, necessarily precludes those not taught—not believers. Nor do we find any order for infant baptism in traditions of the Apostles. They founded churches, enjoining upon them the observance of all the laws of Christ; but in all the particularity of their direction, they no where commend or allude to a law of infant baptism. They even enjoin the religious training and dedication of children, but are silent about their baptism. Hence, the late Dr. Woods. of Andover, in accordance with

the distinct admissions of a large number of learned Pedobaptists<sup>\*</sup>, declares, "It is plain that there is no express precept respecting infant baptism in our sacred writings." According to the analogy of all other positive laws, human or divine, is not infant baptism, being without formal appointment, necessarily without authority? If no where enjoined, how can it be a canon law of the church? If not in her statute book, it should be discarded from her administration.

III. Baptism is limited to believers in its *example* as well as in its design and command. The discipline of armies, the laws of states, and the rules of voluntary associations, are authenticated in the records of subsequent observance as well as in their particular institution. What is appointed in constitutions, by-laws, and statute books, is confirmed in the succeeding annals of orders and governments. The ceremonial enjoined by Moses is constantly reappearing in its several orders, in succeeding prophets, till Christ. In like manner the baptism of believers, enjoined by Christ, is ever recurring in the annals of the primitive church. The baptism of three thousand



believers is noticed in a single record. The eunuch, jailor, and Lydia, were baptized upon profession of faith. And many others are mentioned who sought baptism after joyfully receiving the Word and the influence of the Holy Spirit. But where is the first historical notice of infant baptism in the New Testament. There is no more trace in the Scriptures of its observance than of its institution. We have the annals of primitive churches and missions, without a notice of it. We have Apostolic letters, enjoining christian doctrine and observance, without allusion to it. Why is a rite so particularly enforced in creeds, catechisms, pastoral letters and discourses, so strangely overlooked in apostolic counsels, canons and discipline? The only passages cited as exemplifying the rite, seem rather to preclude it, and evince the weakness of the cause forced to rely on such proof. Paul "baptized the household of Stephanas." 1 Cor. i. 6. But as denoting the character of that household, in a later notice, 1 Cor. xvi. 15, it is said, "Ye know the *house*, (same term as that translated *household* in the first notice,) of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of

Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." The same persons that were baptized ministered to the saints, and therefore could not have been infants. Accordingly, it is made manifest that the whole family of Stephanas consisted purely of adults. In respect to Lydia's household, also cited as establishing infant baptism, it is probable, from her pursuits as a merchant, two hundred miles from home, that no small children were with her; and the close of the narrative makes it clear that her household, consistently with her pursuit and distance from home, was composed of clerks, who like herself embraced the gospel; for after returning from the conversion and baptism of the jailor, Paul is said, with his companion, to have "entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the *brethren*, (her clerks or household before alluded to,) they comforted them and departed." Thus those baptized with Lydia are styled *brethren* and are *comforted*, and therefore could not have been unconscious babes. Nor does the baptism of the jailor's household avail more towards establishing infant baptism. It is as expressly said that all

*believed*, as that all were baptized. If explanations were not given in the context, these narratives would no more prove infant baptism, than the frequent household baptisms occurring in the history of our churches. But when from the face of the record it is obvious no infants were embraced in the baptism, the citation of these instances betrays the utter want of scriptural authority for infant baptism. Hence Starck, a learned Pedobaptist, in his history of infant baptism, says, "There is no single example to be found in the New Testament where infants were baptized. In household baptisms there was always a reference to the gospel having been received."

As, therefore, all positive laws, human or divine, must have a historical exemplification, as well as an enactment, and as infant baptism has neither scriptural appointment or exemplification, it is not a canon law of the christian church.

IV. Baptism is also limited to believers in all just analogy to other observances and earlier dispensations. Passing for the present the absurdity of founding a positive institution upon analogies and inferences, however clear, let us notice the

inconclusiveness of those adduced to support infant baptism.

It may be received, it is urged, as the canon of scripture upon the authority of the church. But the canon of scripture does not rest upon ecclesiastical decision, but upon the foregoing fact of divine inspiration, demonstrated by various internal and external evidences. To make the case parallel, the ecclesiastical endorsement of infant baptism must rest upon the evidence of forgoing divine appointment. As this is wanting, the analogy fails, and leaves infant baptism without support. It is also contended that infant baptism has the same authority as the Sabbath. But the divine institution of sabbatical rest is admitted by all, and its change of time authorized by apostolic example. But we ask in vain for the proof of an appointment of infant baptism, or an apostolic example of its observance. It is further maintained, that infant baptism rests upon the same basis as female communion. But the Lord's Supper was instituted for believers, as such, whether male or female. Females are, therefore, entitled to it on the same ground that males are—disciple-

ship to Christ and voluntary christian profession. Moreover, in the scriptures man is commonly made the representative of the race, and laws and promises addressed to him, unless limited in their nature, are addressed to the race. Have infants, like females, common religious capacities, relations, duties, and hopes with men? It is also claimed that infant baptism may be predicated upon the organic relation of children to believing parents. But if ordinances are based upon our ideas of fitness rather than upon the scriptures, rites may be multiplied or varied according to the judgment or caprice of communities or individuals, and the christian ceremonial become as encumbered and formal as paganism or papacy. Besides, this plea averlooks the spiritual and voluntary character of christianity, and seeks the prerogatives of birth-right and external descent, so emphatically disclaimed in the announcement of the new covenant. Under it men cannot be born into the kingdom of heaven by the blood of sacrificial rites, by the will of man declared in external covenants, or through any fleshy descent. Moreover, if a rite is claimed to celebrate the or-

ganic influence and promise of the family, should not one of proximate solemnity be awarded to the promise of a christian age, a christian land, a christian education, the possession of the Bible, or the observance of the Sabbath. Or if infant baptism is urged on the ground of religious promise to the young, should it not be extended to all the children of a christian land, as cheered by a promise not dawning on pagan lands, or upon later periods of life. Such an extension would be justified upon the same general principle urged in the plea we are considering, and would seem less invidious, and would guard against the dangerous assumption by children of superior promise. While we acknowledge the importance of the organic influences operating upon children, especially those of the family, and avail ourselves of them as facilities of education, we derive no warrant from them for a new religious ordinance, or for displacing an existing one, and thus dislocating the institutional order of the christian church.

Infant baptism is inferred from the supposed moral purity of infancy. Passing the doctrine of total depravity, which might be pleaded against

this inference, we remark, that if their holiness were conceded, the rite of a voluntary religion would be unsuitable to them. They are passive in the rite—expressing nothing, experiencing nothing, knowing nothing. As the covenant of a voluntary profession, the bond of a voluntary compact, the symbol of a conscious regeneration, baptism does not belong to infants. It relates to the experience and mode of salvation of adults, and not of infants. Their salvation does not depend upon faith, repentance, conscious regeneration, or public profession; therefore baptism does not belong to them. We concede their hopeful state, but do not allow to them a place in a voluntary institution and profession.

Infant baptism is commended by others from some supposed spiritual efficacy in its observance. Through all the periods following the apostolic age, and the whole range of formalism, this rite has been commended as of saving effect. (The Papacy pronounces it “necessary to salvation.” The Greek church commends it on the ground, that whosoever is baptized “is regenerated, cleansed, and justified.” The Swiss church says,

that by baptism we are "received into the covenant and family, and so into the inheritance of the sons of God." The Bohemian church says, that in baptism the Lord "washeth away sin, begetteth a man again, and bestoweth salvation." The Confession of Augsburg says, "baptism is necessary for salvation." The English church says, by baptism we are "made members of Christ and children of God." The Westminster Confession says, baptism "is a seal of grace, of our engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, adoption, and eternal life." The Confession of Helvetia says, that by baptism the Lord "doth regenerate us and cleanse us from our sins." The Confession of France says, that by baptism "we are engrafted into Christ's body." Wesley, representing the Methodist church, says, "by baptism we who are by nature the children of wrath, are made the children of God." ) Later interpreters, though shrinking from these avowals of creeds, still persist in claiming some undefined efficacy in baptism. Some aver that by it the children of believers become the seed of Abraham. They are not his literal seed; if they are his spiritual seed they



are real christians, and subsequent apostacy from piety is falling from grace. Others affirm that baptized children sustain the same relation to the immunities and promises of the church, that children born under any government do to the state. That is, by complying with the terms of the gospel they may be saved—rejecting them they must be lost. Wherein does the relation of unbaptized children differ from this? What distinctive advantage is illustrated by this supposition? Others claim that baptized children sustain the same relation to the religious faith and profession of their parents as to their estates. If so religion and church membership are a birth-right inheritance, and under the new as well as the old dispensation, we are born into covenant relation by the will of man and outward observance. It is urged that baptized children stand in the same relation to the church as infant Levites to the priesthood. This analogy fails in two points. Only the children of Levites were eligible to the priesthood; but who will pretend that only baptized infants are eligible to church membership or the kingdom of heaven. Besides, the priesthood

was strictly a birth-right office. Will any claim that church membership and salvation are conferred by parents? It is maintained by some, that baptized children are actual members of the church. If they are, they are entitled to the communion as well as baptism, and subject to discipline, and in case of doctrinal error or moral delinquency, to formal exclusion.

Thus by their confessions, dogmatic teachings, and apologies, it is shown that Pedobaptists of succeeding ages and all lands, have supposed some mystic virtue or saving power in baptism, and hence continued and commended its early celebration. Hence its popular observance and ministry to superstition and spiritual despotism. But such an efficacy is a mere pretense of the schoolmen—a figment of imposture, an assumption of Antichrist. It is against the spiritual and personal nature of christianity, and the symbolical character of the ordinance. Besides, as a matter of history and general observation, no perceptible change is wrought by infant baptism. What vice is eradicated or virtue implanted by it? Where do its subjects evince more gracious

tendencies than others as well educated? What facility does it add to religious training? What does it avail without parental discipline? Without it where is parental training deficient?

But the most common appeal in support of infant baptism, is the Abrahamic covenant, and a claimed substitution of baptism for circumcision. This covenant, (Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3; xiii. 14-17; xv. 8-18; vxii, 1-21,) is two-fold, literal and spiritual. In its literal terms the natural descendants of the patriarch were constituted a commonwealth—an external, visible community. By its spiritual application his spiritual descendants were distinguished as a church. In the literal application of the covenant God and the nation were the parties; in its spiritual application God and his people. National blessings and promises were secured in the former application, spiritual blessings in the latter. The conditions in the former application were citizenship attested by circumcision, and honored by obedience; of the latter, faith in the Messiah as the Saviour of the world, and spiritual regeneration. In its national application the covenant, with all its observances and promis-

es, was terminated by the extinction of the Jewish commonwealth. But the covenant with Abraham, in its spiritual application, being a renewal of the covenant of grace, older than Abraham and broader than the Jewish commonwealth, remained after the commonwealth was abolished. It is a serious mistake to overlook this two fold application of the covenant with Abraham, and confound national with gracious promises, and a commonwealth with the church of God. As the father of a nation Abraham represents no existing covenant; as the father of the faithful he remains a representative of the covenant of grace. "Know ye therefore that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." "So then they who be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gallatians iii. 7, 9, 29. There were two methods of being recorded the seed of Abraham, one by natural descent, the other by faith. All his natural descendants even were not reckoned his spiritual seed and partakers of his spiritual promises. Hence, it is said "They are not all Israel who are

of Israel." All who by birth-right, or purchase, or declaration of allegiance, became an integral part of the Jewish commonwealth, and constructively the children of Abraham, and therefore eligible to national promises, were entitled to circumcision as the seal of the national covenant. In like manner all who by spiritual birth, regeneration, and faith, became the spiritual seed of Abraham, subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, are eligible to the seal and promise of the new covenant. As by natural birth persons become entitled to the seal of the national covenant, so by spiritual birth men become entitled to the seal or symbol of the covenant of grace. As circumcision only declared an antecedent relation and character, so baptism only celebrates a forgoing gracious experience and promise. Circumcision was a privilege secured by natural birth, baptism by spiritual birth. The Abrahamic covenant, in its just analogy, therefore, gives no countenance to infant baptism, but rather inferentially interdicts it. How inconclusive the appeal to circumcision to establish infant baptism! If we admit the idea of a *seal* in baptism, and a substitute for

circumcision, in the nature of the case baptism could never be awarded to natural birth-right and carnal descent, but to spiritual; and if we admit, in a loose sense, a ritual substitution of the old by the new covenant, nothing is gained for infant baptism. If it were admitted that the christian chapel has succeeded to the place of the Jewish Temple or Synagogue, it would not follow that it should be subject to the same regime, and reproduce the same rites, sacrifices, and priestly ministrations. If it were allowed that the christian ministry have succeeded to the place of the Jewish priesthood in the economy of religion, it would not follow that their ceremonial induction into office, official dress, and ministration should conform to the Jewish ritual. If it were conceded that the Lord's Supper has taken the place of the Pass-over in religious observance, it would not follow that the christian feast should be conformed to the order of the Jewish rite, and extended to children. In like manner, if baptism were appointed in the place of circumcision, it would be varied in its application to suit the nature and promises of the new dispensation. It would be limited to believ-

ers, by spiritual birth-right inheriting spiritual promises, analogous to temporal promises sealed to natural birth-right by circumcision. But that there could have been no such substitution of baptism for circumcision—that the former should be considered as having superceded the latter, is apparent from the apostolic council at Corinth. If the substitution had been declared, and the churches made aware of it, a council to decide as to the continued obligation of circumcision would not have been called. If such a substitution were prospectively designed, the announcement of that design at the opening of the council would have cut short its deliberations. If the substitution had been admissible as a basis for the settlement of the controversy, it would have been proposed in the progress of the council. But as there is no allusion to the substitution of infant baptism for circumcision as an existing fact, a prospective arrangement, or as an admissible basis for the adjustment of pending difficulties, it seems clear beyond successful contradiction, that it is without scriptural authority. If baptism were a substitute, the primitive disciples, already circumcised,

would not have received it. But though thousands of the circumcised Jews entered the christian church, there is no evidence that one entered without baptism.

Scripture authority for baptism is inferred from the testimony of the Fathers. Justin Martyr, Iræneus, and Tertulian, living in the last of the second and first of the third centuries, are cited with most confidence as recognizing and supporting the rite. Justin Martyr says, "There were many of both sexes, some sixty, some seventy years old, who were made disciples of Christ from their childhood." This passage refers to the period of childhood, not of infancy. It does not say the persons referred to were baptized, but disciplined at that early age. If baptism is intended it is certain instruction of which infants are incapable is also embraced. This record, therefore, seems to be only a parallel to that of the early piety of Timothy, or of Samuel, and to furnish no evidence of the observance of infant baptism. Iræneus says, "Christ came to save all persons who by him are regenerated unto God, infants, and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder



persons." To construe this passage into the support of infant baptism, it must be assumed, contrary to fact, that at that date *regenerated* had come to be used interchangeably with *baptized*, as at a later period, after the doctrine of salvation by sacraments had obtained. Besides, "baptized into God through Christ" is an unmeaning expression." But the phrase, "regeneration to God through Christ," as referring to the general recovery of the race through the Messiah, teaches the scope and grandeur of Christ's mission—reaching in the influence and promise of his incarnation and redemption, every period and every condition of life. This passage, therefore, furnishes no evidence of the existence of infant baptism in the time of Iræneus, much less of its apostolic institution. Tertulian says, "Therefore according to every person's condition, and disposition, and age also, the delay of baptism is more profitable, especially as to little children. Let them come, then, when they are grown up; let them come when they understand; let them come when they are taught whither they are to come; let them become christians when they are able to know

Christ. Why should their innocent age make haste to the forgiveness of sin? Men act more cautiously in temporal concerns. Worldly things are not committed to those to whom divine things are entrusted. Let them know how to ask for salvation, that you may appear to give to them that asketh." To give this passage the least bearing in favor of infant baptism its real meaning is overlooked, a false hypothesis of the state of religious sentiment and observance is assumed, and even the stand point of the author is misconstrued. The passage does not refer to infants at all, but only to persons, either from immature years or want of serious reflection, not appreciating the responsibilities of the christian profession. From exaggerated views of the efficacy of Baptism, all, older or younger, were hurried to the baptismal ablution; but Tertulian, like aged conservative preachers in modern times, remonstrated against so lightly merging the world into the church. The idea that he was protesting against infant baptism as an existing and received institution, is a figment of sectarian sophistry. From these most learned and authoritative of the early Fath-

ers, therefore, no evidence is derived of the existence of infant baptism in their time. These famous and oft cited passages utterly fail to prove it. Moreover, from the same writers numerous allusions might be cited apparently overlooked by Pedobaptists, recognizing the prevalence and prominence of the immersion of believers only. If, however, these passages referred to infant baptism, they would not prove it to be an apostolic institution. Some of the best Pedobaptist critics therefore, admit that Justin Martyr, Iræneus, and Tertulian have been falsely construed to sustain infant baptism. Starck says, "The defenders of infant baptism attempt to prove it from Justin Martyr and Iræneus, but neither of these writers say what is attributed to them." Bum Garten Crusius says, "The celebrated passage in Iræneus is not to be applied to infant baptism." Rosler, in his library of the Christian Fathers, says, "All the arguments put together do not prove that *renasci* (regenerated) means to be baptized." And the ablest critics concede that Tertulian furnishes no evidence of the existence of infant baptism in his time, but the contrary. While in these most

learned of the early Fathers every where evidence of the immersion of believers is traced, and nowhere of the sprinkling of children, it is a significant fact that the advocates of infant baptism do not pretend to find any traces of it in the writings of Barnabus, Clemens Romanus, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp, the immediate successors of the Apostles. In their writings collected by Eusebius, frequent reference is made to the baptism of adults in founts, pools, rivers, and lakes, but there is no more allusion to infant baptism than in the writings of the Apostles, whose cotemporaries ordained them or delivered to them apostolic traditions. In the third century, it is generally conceded, infant baptism, arising from exaggerated views of the efficacy of the ordinance, began to be observed. And as it was customary to claim apostolic authority for every doctrine or usage deemed sacred or important, from that period, with more or less distinctness, the claim of apostolic tradition for infant baptism was set up. As the rite grew into general use the claim was more generally and confidently put forth. Hence any number of the later Fathers might be cited claim-

ing apostolical authority for infant baptism. But as showing how little importance can be attached to this claim, it must be borne in mind writers of the same date, and even the same writers, who plead apostolic precedent for infant baptism, plead the same authority for the most unscriptural dogmas and monstrous superstitions of papacy. If the testimonies of the Fathers of that later period are available for Pedobaptists, they are equally available for Papists, and the whole ceremonial and system of doctrines of papacy have the warrant of apostolic tradition. But if the authority of these Fathers cannot uphold papacy, no more can it infant baptism. This notice of the testimony of the Fathers, so much relied upon, may seem altogether superfluous; because, if infant baptism is not commanded or exemplified in the New Testament, it cannot be authenticated as a divine law by any later or less decisive authority. If not in the Bible we need not concern ourselves in what books or creeds it is found. If it did not originate in the time of Christ, we need not perplex ourselves to ascertain when it did take its rise.

The design of our argument has been to show that infant baptism is not a scriptural institution. In a careful examination of the whole range of argument on the subject, the most learned and candid critics—Pedobaptists themselves—admit that infant baptism was not a primitive law and observance of the church. Professor Lang says, “All attempts to make out infant baptism from the New Testament fail. It is totally opposed to the spirit of the apostolic age, and to the fundamental principles of the New Testament.” Schleiermacher says, “All traces of infant baptism which one will find in the New Testament must first be put into it.” Bum Garten Crusius says, “Infant baptism can be supported neither by a distinct apostolic tradition, nor apostolic practice.” Starck says, “There is not a single example to be found in the New Testament where infants were baptized. In household baptism there was always reference to the gospel having been received. The New Testament presents just as good grounds for infant communion. Therefore, learned men, (such as Salmasius, Arnold, Louis d’ Vires, Suicer, and Strabo,) have regarded both infant bap-

tism and infant communion as an innovation introduced since the apostolic times. . . . The connection of infant baptism with circumcision deserves no consideration." Augustin says, "The parallel between circumcision and baptism is altogether foreign to the New Testament." Kaiser says, "Infant baptism was not an original institution of christianity." Bretschneider observes "Rheinard, Morus, and Doderlein say infant baptism is not to be found in the Bible." Neander, the first of church historians of his age, says, "From the example of household baptisms infant baptism can by no means be inferred." "Not only the late appearance of any express mention of infant baptism, but the long continued opposition to it, leads to the conclusion that it was not of apostolic origin," Dressler remarks, "The immediate cause of infant baptism, it cannot be denied, was extravagant ideas of its necessity to salvation." Weiner says, "Originally only adults were baptized, but at the end of the second century, in Africa, and in the third century generally, infant baptism was introduced." Kitto, author of a recent standard work entitled a "Cyclopedia

of Biblical Literature," fast gaining a place in the libraries of pastors and intelligent laymen over the land, says, "Infant baptism was established neither by Christ nor the Apostles. . . . The confusion between the outward and inward conditions of baptizing, and the magical effect imputed to it; confusion of thought about the visible and invisible church, condemning all those who did not belong to the former—the doctrine of the natural corruption of men so closely connected with the preceeding—and finally the desire of distinguishing christian children from the Jewish and heathen, and of commending them more effectually to the care of the christian community; all these circumstances, and many more, have contributed to the introduction of infant baptism at a very early period."

These testimonies of critics are given after the most thorough and impartial consideration of all the arguments alleged in support of infant baptism. They have far greater weight, because they are not the opinions of partizans to uphold their own theological system and consistency, but concessions to the great facts of history and re-



sults of criticism, against their own ecclesiastical position and interest. While no analogy of revelation or reason, or authority of tradition or human testimony, could establish a canon law of the church without scripture command or example, the obvious fallacy of those cited to support infant baptism, only make more apparent its imposture.

V. The reasons for the universal disuse of infant baptism may be thus stated :

1. Because it is not commanded, and no merely *positive* law can be binding, in either human or divine government, without specific enactment.

2. Because it is without scriptural example, and no positive law can be found in state or church without example in authoritative annals.

3. Because it is without just analogy of reason or revelation. While no analogies or inferences could authenticate a positive law, or do more than corroborate one already established, the inconclusiveness of inferencies and the fallacy of analogies urged to support infant baptism, only corroborate the forgoing conclusion of its utter want of scriptural authority.

4. Because it contradicts the design of baptism.

Infants are incapable of its voluntary profession, its personal covenant, and its celebration of conscious experience and hopes.

5. Because confounding, in their observance, promise and sanctions, human with divine laws, it weakens the veneration for scriptural institutions, and challenges the curse pronounced in Revelation against those taking from or adding to the preceptive order of the scriptures.

Because it is a relic or symbol of the formalism inherent perhaps in the old, but done away with in the new dispensation. As a birth-right and formal religion has been superceded by one more personal and spiritual, birth-right ordinances should give place to voluntary profession.

7. Because it becomes to many the refuge of a delusive repose. They are trusting to some imaginary efficacy of a rite, some supposed guaranty of parental devotion and observance, while continuing in sin and living without God and without hope in the world. Hence the hopeless security of the millions of papacy, and national establishments throughout Europe.

8. Because it fetters the freedom of the chris-

tian profession. The commitments of early training are all that human liberty and voluntary training can bear. An advance to institutional observance without the assenting will and conscience of the subject, takes away the choice and voluntariness of religion, and imposes the yoke of sect. In all engagements of early thought and conscience to Christ and the Scriptures, the right and obligation of voluntary choice in assuming christian profession must be recognized, or violence is done to religious liberty. Does not infant baptism forestall the religious choice of tens of thousands, and determine their later denominational alliances against their conscientious preferences.

9. Because it subverts the form of the christian profession, and dislocates the institutional order of the church. If some form of dedication of children were professed merely as a traditional order of human authority, without assuming divine sanction and promise, less objection would be urged to it. But the unauthorized transfer of a divine ordinance from the period of personal profession to that of parental consecration, from the

church to the nursery, annuls the ordinance, by changing its form and purpose. Baptism, as a voluntary christian profession and symbol of glorious doctrines and promises, is done away in proportion as infant baptism obtains, and will become extinct in its universal triumph. Now, many a penitent believer, asking baptism under the great commission and according to apostolic example, is repulsed by the plea of a forgoing parental observance. And in the universal prevalence of that parental observance, no human being could celebrate apostolic baptism.

10. Because, while resorted to as a means or guaranty of safe condition, it discredits or casts doubts upon the common salvation of all infants.

11. Because it is the pillar of papacy, the natural foundation of state churches, and the direct cause of merging the church and the world every where.

12. Because it is an insuperable barrier to christian union, and fruitful cause of controversy. Those practicing it surely need have no scruples of conscience against the disuse of what is not enjoined in the scriptures, while those not prac-

ting it dare not receive human traditions as divine laws. Its growing neglect emboldens the expectation that it may soon be removed from among the causes of religious controversy, and the barriers to christian union.

13. Because the proper strict construction of the divine constitution of the church precludes it, while the loose construction resorted to in its defense may be plead equally in support of the traditions of papacy. It was the significant and sufficient answer of a deaf mute, when asked his views of the form and subjects of the christian profssion, "Christ said nothing about sprinkling or infant baptism." And who dare enjoin laws where Christ has not spoken!

14. Because it is no appreciable part or necessary facility of religious education. What vico does it eradicate, what virtue implant? What gracious bent of the will secure? Let children be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—taught in the scriptures, and if need be in catechisms—dedicated to God in prayer and example, and religious instruction—encouraged in all pious affections and purposes, and when

evincing the spirit and graces of regeneration, be baptized in voluntary christian profession. But let us not, in pursuit of an imaginary help to pious education, pervert a christian ordinance or dislocate the institutional order of the church. For the forgoing and other reasons that might be adduced, ought not infant baptism, as now observed, to fall into universal disuse? Ought it not to be discarded at once and forever from the usages of the christian church, as interpolations from a statute book, or Apocryphal books from the scripture canons?





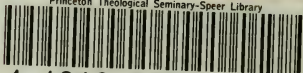








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